THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : (a) and (b) No Sir. There is however, a strain on Railway finances to meet the requirements of the Railways in full which is mainly due to the lower levels of Budgetary support that we have been receiving till recently and the additional requirement of funds necessary on account of the implementation of the Fifth pay Commission's recommendations.

(c) and (d) Yes Sir. Railways had projected a plan size of Rs.11,000 crores for the year 1997-98 with Rs.3300 crores as Budgetary Support, Rs.3000 crores as Internal Generation and Rs.1650 crores as contribution from the General Exchequer towards social obligations. However, this was not agreed to by the planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance and the plan size had to be reduced to Rs.8300 crores with Rs.1831 crores as Budgetary support (since increased to Rs.2001 crores) and Rs.3419 crores as Internal Generation of Resources.

(e) and (f) The Railways have been able to meet the demands of traffic despite these resource constraints through increased utilisation and improved productivity of assets. The pace of developmental works and the expansion of the Railway network have, however, slowed down somewhat due to the need to utilise the available resources to meet the immediate short term demands/requirements.

(g) Dialogue is continuing with the Ministry of Finance to find ways and means of augmenting the Railway's resources .

International Airport at Srinagar

323. SHRI GULAM RASOOL KAR : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether it has been decided that Srinagar Airport will be converted into as International Airport;

(b) if so, the details thereof ;

(c) whether clearance from the Ministry of Defence has been received;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) by what time the Srinagar Airport is likely to be converted into an International Airport ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATRAJAN) : (a) and (b) Srinagar airport belongs to the IAF and Airports Authority of India (AAI) is maintaining a Civil Enclave. The request from the state Govt. for upgradation of facilities at Srinagar airport to cater for international operations has been accepted and the proposal is at the planning stage.

(c) and (d) Yes,Sir. Ministry of Defence have agreed in principle to the proposal.

(e) No definite time schedule can be indicated at this stage.

[Translation]

Telecast of Programmes based on the Lives of Great men

324. PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether programmes based on the lives of great men of India are pending for telecast ;

(b) if so, the names of these great men; and

(c) if not, whether the Government contemplate to produce programmes based on the lives of such great men?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY) : (a) Yes,Sir.

(b) The programmes on the following great personalities have been approved under sponsorship category for telecast on DD-1 and DD-2 channels of Doordarshan subject to availability of suitable time slot;

1. Lord Buddha

2. Maharana Pratap

3. Jagadguru Shankaracharya

4. Mahatma Gandhi

5. Punyashlok Ahilyabai Holkar

(c) Does not arise.

[English]

Allotment of DDA Plots For Office-cum-Shopping

325. SHRI SIBU SOREN : Will the Minister of URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Delhi Development Authority has advertised for the allotment of space under the self financing scheme (SFS) for office cum shopping centre on plot No.5 at District Centre, Janakpuri, New Delhi;

(b) if so, the number of applications and amount received in this regard;

(c) whether the allotment of the space is still pending despite of full amounts nine years back;

(d) if so, the details thereof and the reasons for the delay in allotment; and

(e) the time by when a final decision is likely to be taken in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATARAMAN) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) As reported by Delhi Development Authority 15 persons got themselves registered by paying registration deposit of Rs.20,000/- each.

(c) to (e) The registrants deposited the amount towards cost of the unit, but the allotment of specific unit could not be made because of non-commissioning of lifts and fire safety arrangements. Now since the completion report of the said services has been received, the allotment of specific units to the eligible registrants will be made through draw of lots.

[Translation]

Mahoba-Khajuraho Rail Line

326. SHRI GANGA CHARAN RAJPUT : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) the estimated total cost of construction of Mahoba-Khajuraho rail line;

(b) the details of the funds allocated for the above line during the current financial year; and

(c) the present status of the project ?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : (a) The estimated cost of new rail line between Lalitpur Satna, Rewa-Sidhi Singrauli and Mahoba-Khajuraho (541 kms.) is Rs.974.982 crores. However, Mahoba-Khajuraho section is not yet a part of the sanctioned project. It is proposed to obtain the necessary clearances for this sector and then include it with the approval of Parliament.

(b) The outlay for 1997-98 is Rs.0.01 crores.

(c) The work is to be taken up after the necessary clearances have been obtained.

[English]

Import of Coal by SAIL

327. SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether Steel Authority of India Ltd. has decided to reduce import of coal;

(b) whether SAIL has decided to use domestic coal with more ash content;

(c) whether SAIL will also have its own coal washeries; and

(d) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) The requirement of imported coking coal is dependent on the qualitative and quantitative gaps between the total requirement and availabillity of coking coal from domestic sources and landed cost of domestic vis-a-vis imported coking coal. As an overall strategy to reduce cost of production at SAIL plants the requirement of coking coal, including imported coking coal, is being reduced by adopting techno-economic measures.

(b) SAIL is using domestic coking coal with higher ash content by suitably blending the same with low ash imported coking coal for use in the blast furnaces.

(c) and (d) SAIL owns two washeries-one at Chasnalla (Captive to Indian Iron and Steel Company Ltd., a subsidiary of SAIL) and another at Durgapur. At present there is no plan to add any new washery.

Prasar Bharati Act

328. KUMARI SUSHILA TIRIYA : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether a number of employees of AIR/DD have been sent to various Ministries after the Prasar Bharati Act came into force;

(b) if so, the criteria adopted in this regard;

(c) whether employees will be given option or they will be shifted as per discretion of higher officers; and

(d) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) The employees will be given option as per provisions of the Prasar Bharati Act,1990.

[Translation]

DD Kendra in Gujarat

329. SHRI JAYSINGH CHAUHAN : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether Shamlaji Doordarshan Kendra in Sabarkantha district in Gujarat was inaugurated two and half years ago but it has not been commissioned;